

## **TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF BANNING LATEX FROM HEALTH FACILITIES AND FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS**

My name is Lori Spielman and I developed a life threatening latex allergy while working in a job that I loved with the Dallas Fire Department. It has become exhausting to me to educate people that YES- one latex balloon or glove could put me in the hospital and potentially kill me. Avoidance is the only option. It became a burden to have to call ahead to ask the questions, "Do you have latex gloves?" "Balloons?" "Is it safe for me to go?" It is embarrassing to have to decline birthday parties and other celebrations where latex balloons would be or where latex gloves are used. It is frustrating to not know what hospital, medical office, dental practice, or ambulance is safe for me.

Natural Rubber Latex Allergy is caused by sensitization to proteins in the sap-like fluid (latex) in the commercial rubber tree, *Hevea brasiliensis*. There are many different latex proteins that can trigger an allergic reaction. 13 have been identified as allergens and characterized. There are various high risk populations such as Spina Bifida patients, healthcare workers, and rubber industry workers. Now, other glove wearing professionals such as food service workers, janitors, hair stylists, and day care providers are becoming latex allergic. There are different types of latex allergy reactions. Type I, the immediate type, is hypersensitivity upon exposure when histamine and other mediators are released causing symptoms which may be local such as hives or systemic which is anaphylaxis. There is also Type IV which is delayed hypersensitivity. This typically occurs 24-96 hours after exposure may also be referred to allergic contact dermatitis. My latex allergy began this way but worsened with each exposure.

Often, patients diagnosed with a life-long disorder will experience the stages commonly associated with grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and finally acceptance. One may experience all or one of these emotions while learning to live with latex allergy. Being diagnosed with latex allergy often leads to life changes that may be stressful. It may also affect work and social settings, impacting relationships with family, friends, and co-workers.

I am developing my support system as I continue to navigate this allergy. I am asking you all to be a part of the solution in preventing life-threatening anaphylaxis and future exposures to latex.

Lori Spielman

Where can I learn more about the allergy?

American Latex Allergy Association (ALAA)

[www.latexallergyresources.org](http://www.latexallergyresources.org)

American Academy of Asthma Allergy and Immunology (ACAAI)

[www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org)

American College of Asthma Allergy and Immunology (ACAAI)

[www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org)